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The New York Times

November 19, 1987, Thursday, Late City Final Edition

SECTION: Section A; Page 20, Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 1175 words

HEADLINE: Smokers Hide and Drag Harder As Society Makes Them Outcasts

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BODY:

Andrea Green, a marketing and promotion consultant for banks, was on the telephone with a man who helps companies develop programs for employees who want to quit smoking. She lit a cigarette, quietly, she thought. But she was not quiet enough.

"I flicked my Bic and he heard it," she said. "He said, 'What was that sound? I heard you light a cigarette.'" Ms. Green dismissed his comment as ridiculous, insisting she had done no such thing.

A few years ago she might have exhibited some bravado, but not now. Smokers are pariahs these days, and they know it. In restaurants they hold their cigarettes under the table and try to wave the smoke away. At the office they slink into bathrooms, hallways and stairwells. On the streets, they steal a few puffs before downing breath mints.

Ms. Green, a longtime smoker, is grateful that she works at home rather than in banks, where she once made her living. When she visits clients, "there's not an ashtray in sight," she said. "Employees are sent out to the elevator if they want to smoke."

Courage for the Timid

Today the American Cancer Society is holding its annual Great American Smokeout in the hope that many smokers will be so fed up with such tactics that they will decide to do without, at least for a day.

A 1986 survey by the Bureau of National Affairs, a private research company in Washington, showed that 36 percent of the 660 companies surveyed had adopted policies on smoking. "The policies are spreading, and the policies are getting tougher," said Robert Rosner of the Seattle-based Smoking Policy Institute, which helps companies develop rules.

The rules reflect a growing social consensus that smoke is dangerous to nonsmokers. This has given once-timid objectors new courage, whether at home, at work or in restaurants. And it has produced peculiar adaptations among smokers, who themselves seem to find their habit increasingly gruesome.

Some simply hide. Liz Riecker, who works in a New York brokerage firm where "people look at you" if you light up, smokes in the lavatory. So does a teacher in Boston, who ducks into a lavatory near her classroom for a cigarette. "I have to go in the little stall and keep fanning the air," she said. "I

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feel like I'm back in high school."

#### Loading Up When They Can

In anticipation of deprivation, many smokers load up on nicotine wherever smoking is permitted. Linda Eskenazi, a secretary in New York, said she smokes "maybe five in an hour," when she goes outside to eat lunch, and "I don't even like smoking." At the New York Telephone Company, the smoking section of the cafeteria is thick with smoke because employees "are taking four cigarettes instead of one" before they return to their desks, according to Clare Leonard, a secretary.

Jeanie Caulk, who works at the Stewart Title Company in Houston, begins smoking earlier in the day, "right after I get out of the shower," she said. With smoking time more precious, some drag harder to get every last bit of nicotine. "They become much more valuable, like a cup of coffee," said Thomas Tolley, a budget analyst for the General Services Administration in Washington.

Mr. Tolley, who has smoked for almost 20 years, said he is less productive because he has to leave his desk every 45 minutes to have a cigarette in the smoking lounge. "It isn't the five minutes that it takes," he said. "It's the interruption itself. Before, when you were working with a programming problem, you could lean back and have a cigarette and think about your problem. Now, you think about a cigarette."

Some smokers find that, separated from their cigarettes, they cannot work at all. Callers to The Chicago Sun-Times who ask for William Braden will be transferred to the smoking lounge, where the 32-year veteran of the paper spends much of his working day. Mr. Braden, who smokes as many as five packs a day of nonfiltered cigarettes, goes to his desk to make telephone calls, but he can't write there. Recently he spent nearly all of his time in the smoking room writing a four-part series on infant mortality.

#### Gatherings in Smoking Room

Inside the lounge he has become "good buddies" with financial and fashion writers he never saw before. "We've formed new social sets," he said.

Mr. Tolley, the budget analyst, said he meets a cross section of the organization in the smoking room, including his boss. At the Hirschfeld Companies in New York, Sean J. Leary says smokers flock to his office because they can indulge their habits there. As a result, "they end up getting more guidance from the boss than the nonsmokers do."

Keith Kurz, an administrator at the University of Rochester, finds his tolerance of smoking draws clerical workers into his office more often. "It's not creating problems," he said. "You find out more about what's going on."

Some smokers who once ate lunch at their desk and eschewed taking breaks have changed their ways. "Every morning now, I take a 15-minute break," said Mrs. Leonard, the New York Telephone secretary.

#### Objections on the West Coast

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Nonsmokers become jealous of those breaks if they do not get them too. "In one of my client companies, the nonsmokers got upset," said Rita Addison, president of Clean Air Associates, a Boston concern that helps companies set up smoking policies. "They said, 'How many breaks do I get extra? I want a smoking lounge.'" Because of that, she said, companies have to be diligent about maintaining a fair policy on breaks. At New York Telephone, for instance, Lee Infanti does not smoke but sometimes takes a break in the lounge to join friends who do.

Anti-tobacco sentiment is particularly strong on the West Coast. In Del Mar, Calif., voters defeated a proposal last month that would have banned outdoor smoking except in special pens. One New Yorker who recently moved to Los Angeles might have been happier had she been in a pen smoking.

"I was sitting on a bench in a park," she said, "when this woman, way down the way, came up to me and said, 'would you put that out?' It wasn't like we were in an elevator." Fearful of drawing any hate mail, she asked that her name not be used.

Most smokers say they would like to quit, and many of them even have dates set. Gail Kane, who works for the Prudential Life Insurance Company in Minneapolis, plans to stop before the snow falls. Otherwise, she will have to smoke outside.

But to some smokers, nothing seems strong enough to counteract a habit they find addicting. Bill Stern, who works for the MCI Telecommunications Corporation, said he can smoke at work, which is fortunate because he has found it impossible to stop, even after acupuncture and hypnosis. Only in the face of lectures from his young nephews will he desist. "I had them to dinner and I didn't smoke," he said. But he did sneak into the bathroom for one cigarette.

"I think the only way to get the diehards like myself," he said, "is to take the things off the market. If you can't get them, you won't do it."

GRAPHIC: Photo of designated smoking area of The Chicago Sun-Times (NYT/Steve Kagan)

SUBJECT: SMOKING

NAME: HALL, TRISH

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